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Wood Resources

To Hotu-matua, who first settled the island, tradition attributes the introduction of all the species of flora of economic use. Among them is the following list of trees, enumerated in the native version of the legend given to me by Tepano: ***mahute, hauhau, toro-miro, naunau, marikuru.*** With the exception of the paper mulberry it is possible that some of them "belonged to the original flora and that the natives who were acquainted with their useful qualities started to propagate them" (208, vol. 2, p. 77). From this list it is clear that the Easter Islanders did not lack wood necessary for the development of their culture, though many writers assume as much in order to increase the mystery of the island. Therefore I consider it extremely important to give the opinion of a prominent botanist, Dr. Carl Skottsberg (208, vol. 2, p. 402):

> . . . And I have been led to believe that some kind of forest once existed in Easter Island, formed by Sophora; and other species, exterminated long ago, may also have occurred. No native tradition tells us anything about these forests, but we can safely conclude that the *toromiro* must have been plentiful. The natives used much wood, not only for the construction of canoes, paddle oars, frame work for their houses and some other necessary things, but they also manufactured small wooden statues and many other ornaments famous for their artistic value, and these must have existed by thousands. The *toromiro* is a small tree, and with a population once amounting to several thousands the supply became exhausted. Cultivated fields and enclosures spread all over the place, crowding out the indigenous vegetation. Paper mulberry, *Cordyline*, *Sapindus*, bananas, cane, taro, sweet potato, etc. were introduced by the natives, and some weeds accompanied them. Many more have been introduced later, when communications with Tahiti and Chile were established; some have become naturalized and form an important feature in the present-day grassland.

Among the trees introduced in the last 60 years, the most common are the *miro-tahiti*, the Eucalyptus, the fig, and the orange. In the gardens of the English residence at Mataveri grow a great many imported plants and new ones are continually being acclimated. The islanders use much wood for the curios that they exchange for clothes and other supplies. Therefore they do not hesitate to destroy a tree to transform it into a score of wooden images. Indeed their destructiveness has become such a nuisance that, outside the residence of the managers, the English company has planted Eucalyptus, the wood of which cannot be carved.

The natives of old used not only the trees growing on the land for the wood they needed but also driftwood which was greatly appreciated. There is a tale of a marvelous tree which landed on the island, sent by the spirit of a man to his son. The arrival of the tree caused great excitement nearly resulting in a fight between groups of islanders, all eager to make precious ornaments from it. (See p. 376.)

Analyses of the wood in some of the scripture tablets and wooden images reveal the use of much *Podocarpus latifolia* and of *Dammara australis*, trees

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for a fortnight of intense activity. Shearing is their only means of making money to acquire necessary goods. They are paid according to the number of sheep they shear per day. Those who are skillful may earn as much as two or three hundred pesos during the season; even young girls make as much as 12 pesos a day. Such salaries, when compared with those of the working classes in Chile, are bountiful. Shearing time is the greatest event of the year, and it has taken the place of the old native feasts. The work, with its competitive aspect and the gathering of the young people in an isolated part of the island, breaks the monotony of daily life.

The standard salary for a day's work, established by the Chilean government, is 4 pesos plus half a sheep and other minor rations. The company has taken great care to give the natives a chance to benefit from the exploitation of the island. Export of corn has recently become a possible source of profit, and the company has tried to encourage the natives to cultivate maize. At the present time only two or three natives have taken advantage of this new source of income.

The most coveted foreign goods are clothes, soap, and perfume. The first things the natives ask for aboard a foreign ship are shirts and trousers. Money is accepted, but a shirt is preferred to a sum of money four or five times as great as the value of the article. In order to obtain clothes, they resort to the making of curios, the most flourishing industry of the island. The men carve wooden images, canes, and swords; and the women plait hats, crowns, or feather strings. Most individuals are able to produce these articles, but some are unusually gifted and have specialized in their crafts. Those who want a stock of curios to trade during the visit of a ship may acquire from the experts articles to trade on their own account. As the ships that visit the island are generally warships or freighters, it is easier for the men to get clothes than for the women, and any textile which may be used by women has a high value on the island.

Soap comes after clothes in the scale of value. Natives are always willing to work or to exchange curios for soap. Combs, mirrors, cheap rings, or earrings are begged for, but not so eagerly coveted.

The islanders rely mostly on the products of their land for food, but imported products are always welcome changes in the monotony of their menus. Flour, rice, and sugar are either bought at the company store or received as part payment for their work. The tobacco which grows on the island is considered too strong by the natives, who prefer Chilean cigarettes. Smoking is a widespread habit, especially among women.

Numerous conflicts have arisen between the natives and the company. Stealing has been one of the chief sources of trouble, but many other difficulties have come from the turbulent spirits of the natives and from their easily excited imaginations. Easter Islanders are apt to believe the most unfounded

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249 contained a very sweet juice which the inhabitants presented to us very frequently, and particularly whenever we asked for something to drink." [271] Only fifty years ago the natives quenched their thirst during their journeys with sugar cane. Even more recently uncultivated sugar cane has been found on several parts of the island. The juice was used as an ointment [302] or as an adhesive upon which pigments were stuck in face painting, and the [342] leaves served as hut coverings. Sugar cane was consumed in great quantities [824] during the feasts. The name for a fragment of sugar cane planted in the soil is *pupura*.

Bananas

245 All early travelers (186, p. 13; 90, p. 101; 53, vol. 1, p. 288) mention bananas, *maika* (*Musa sapientum*), as products offered by the islanders for trade. They were extensively cultivated, for some Spaniards under Gonzalez [435] [262] (90, p. 123) visited a plantation near Vinapu "which stretched about a quarter of a league in extent, and was about half that distance in breadth." Lisiansky (143, p. 86) noticed that "every house was planted round with bananas and sugar cane."

The trees in these plantations were disposed "in the order called quincunx" (130, vol. 2, p. 259) and "planted in straight lines by the cord" (130, vol. 1, p. 76). According to G. Forster (83, vol. 1, p. 571), who went through some plantations near the present Hanga-roa, "the bananas were all growing in holes one foot deep, which were supposed to be contrived for collecting rain, and preserving it for a longer time about the plant." A century later, Thomson (215, p. 456) states that "bananas are grown in holes a foot or more deep and with sloping sides, designed to catch and hold the rain water as long as possible about the roots of the plant." Whenever it was possible natural cavities were utilized, in which decayed branches and leaves made a thick layer of fertile humus. The richest banana plantations of today are located on the west coast near the leper house and the ancient village of Ana-o-hoka, between ahu Akapu and Ahu-te-peu. There, in some places the lava crust which covered enormous subterranean cavities has sunk, forming holes about 10 to 15 feet deep. Trees planted there in former days thrived on a rich, damp soil, protected from the sea winds.

245 At present the natives count ten varieties of bananas, some of which have 192 recently come from Tahiti: *maika-pukapuka, maika-koroteo, maika-hihi, maika-pia, maika-naho-a, maika-pahu* (today extinct), *maika-puru-ino, maika-rio, maika-perora, maika-hiva* (a foreign variety), and *maika-tamoa* (introduced from Samoa). The fruit is still an important staple food of the Easter Islanders. In the past it must have been even more important. The shoots of banana used for planting were called *huri*.

824 Dried banana leaves (*kaka*) were once used as house coverings and the

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Clubs

LONG-HANDLED CLUBS

The long club (*ua*), which is still carved on Easter Island as a curio, was both a weapon and a parade staff for chiefs. Roussel (190, p. 426) includes them among the usual weapons of the natives, but Thomson (215, p. 475) asserts that the *ua* "was carried as a bâton of office before the chiefs and used only for that purpose." Geiseler (87, p. 34) says that the *ua* were carried during walks or to meetings. I was told that they were used as badges of dignity.

The *ua* (fig. 5, *a*) is a long staff, the cross section of which is a flattened ellipse. The upper end is decorated on both sides by bi-fronted human heads with eyes of bone and obsidian. The forehead is high and crossed by curved ridges, representing hair. The cheek bones protrude and have a crescentic form; the mouth, narrow and long, is slightly in relief. In the lobes of the ears, plugs of wood or bone are carefully indicated. The staff widens toward the distal end where it is somewhat flattened and has blunt edges. The distal end is slightly curved.

In Bishop Museum there are two specimens of old *ua* (B3689, B3690) and 16 more modern ones. The largest *ua* in the collection is almost two meters long, but it is of recent date and shows the tendency of the islanders to exaggerate the size of their modern productions.

Suitable pieces of wood for making *ua* were exceedingly rare on the island. This is manifest in the crookedness of many specimens. Holes or knots in the wood were painstakingly filled with small plugs cut to fit. These precious ceremonial weapons were kept in sheaths of bulrushes and were preserved as carefully as the wooden images. Two specimens of these sheaths with *ua* in them are preserved in the Peabody Museum at Cambridge.

SHORT-HANDLED CLUBS

The chief weapon for hand-to-hand fighting was a short, heavy, wooden club called *paoa*, the handle of which was carved in the form of a human head or of a lizard. The principal varieties of these clubs are illustrated in figure 6.

Tepano believed that carved wooden images of lizards (*moko*) were clubs, and to support his belief he quoted a tale in which a hero knocks down demons with a *moko*. Geiseler (87, p. 37) found an analogous tradition and states that the *moko* served principally to defend houses and to expel intruders from the door. As figures of rats or lizards were stood on either side of the door, it is possible that they were occasionally used as weapons.

Wooden Swords

The modern natives manufacture wooden swords for trade with passing ships. No mention is made by early travelers of the use of such weapons, and

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439 they do not appear in extensive collections made in the last 20 years of the nineteenth century. The very form of these curios suggests a recent origin. 322 In the Young collection of Bishop Museum there is a piece of wood (B3625) terminating in the head of an eel which appears to me to be the prototype of modern wooden swords. This specimen, called *puhi* and classified as a wooden club, is also flattened, has blunt edges, and is curved like a boomerang. Its rough workmanship denotes recent origin.

Comparison with other Polynesian Weapons

411 An obsidian point found in the Yodda Valley in the northern division of 171 British New Guinea (200) resembles in shape the Easter Island *mataa*.

[537]

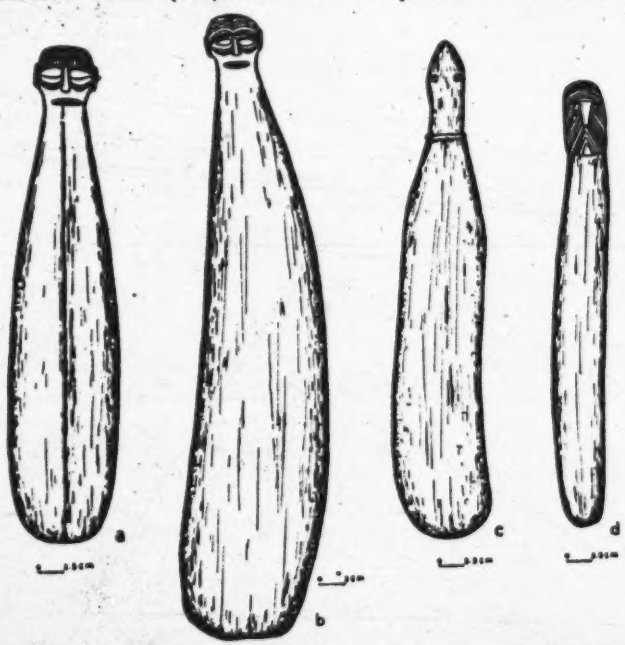

Figure 6.—Short-handled clubs (*paoa*): *a*, length 525 mm., greatest width 113 mm., head similar to that on *aa*, front surface of blade has median longitudinal ridge (B3619); *b*, length 623 mm., greatest width 114 mm. (B3618); *c*, length 530 mm., greatest width 103 mm., length of handle 110 mm., handle carved in lizard head, eyes made of ring of bone and obsidian inlaid in wood, one longitudinal edge and end blunt, one edge rounded (B3701); *d*, length 492 mm., greatest width 58 mm., length of handle 86 mm., probably modern curio, may have been used to beat fish to death, one side of handle carved in image, other side in rough human face and oblique lines, eyes protruding, nose indicated by long depression (B3702).

1: Métraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
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serrated. The knob so divided strongly resembles the outlines of birds' heads as represented on the tablets. 227 324

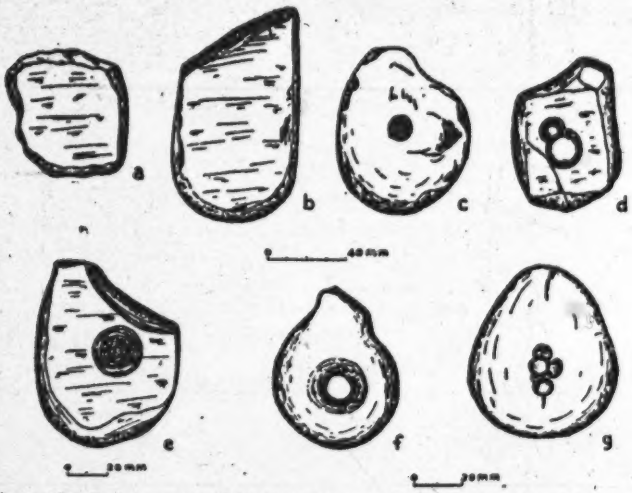

FIGURE 8.—One-piece stone fishhooks in process of manufacture (*a-e*, B3490): *a*, flat piece of stone coarsely chipped at edges into form of hook (72 mm. long, 63 mm. wide, 16 mm. maximum thickness); *b*, stone ground on both faces, sides superficially ground, bottom rim ground to sharp edge on each side (107 mm. long, 67 mm. wide, 17 mm. thick); *c*, slightly polished on both surfaces and edges, hole started on one side (82 mm. long, 70 mm. wide, 17 mm. thick); *d*, edges chipped, central hole drilled through, second hole started (76 mm. long, 54 mm. wide, 14 mm. thick); *e*, well ground on both surfaces and edges, upper slanting edge shows traces of chipping, central hole started (diameter of hole 25 mm., 91 mm. long, 71 mm. wide, 24 mm. thick); *f*, well ground, outline well defined, central hole drilled through (70 mm. long, 60 mm. wide, Trocadero Mus., Paris); *g*, carefully ground, several small holes drilled at center, upper end grooved (70 mm. long, 60 mm. wide, Trocadero Mus.).

Modern stone hooks. The present natives manifest an extraordinary skill in making stone hooks to be sold as curios, but instead of using, as in former days, a fine-grained stone they choose a soft basalt (phonolite or clinker stone) which they carve with metal instruments. In order to give the faked specimens the external appearance of old hooks, the texture of the stone is concealed under a thick layer of black paint. Such precaution is quite recent; the first faked specimens were unvarnished. The workmanship of these curios is remarkable and they might be mistaken for the genuine hooks if they were not thicker and sometimes of an inconvenient form for fishing. 324 439

In the Young collection there are three double hooks made of the same 227 324

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by Du Petit-Thouars' artist (65, atlas, pl. 44) has such a basket hanging at her side. It is large and has a rounded lower edge. Baskets procured by various expeditions are well represented in collections. 285

Baskets were made of bulrushes or of material stripped from the outer side of banana trunks. The rushes were split and dried, divided into strips with the thumb nail, and then plaited. Rush baskets are no longer made and all the specimens obtained by the Franco-Belgian Expedition, as well as those seen in museums, are of banana material. Such baskets are still made for trade. [439]

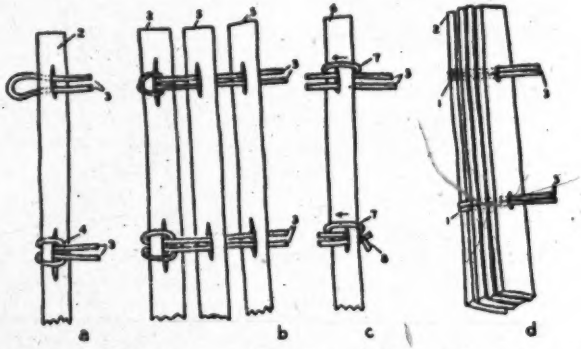

FIGURE 20.—Technique of rush mats: *a*, doubled end (1) of *hau* string was pushed through a slit made in first strip (2) forming the commencement edge, and the free ends (3) were drawn through the loop as in 4 to fix the string; *b*, double string (3) was passed through slits made in each succeeding strip (5, 5) until the required width of the mat was attained; *c*, one of the two strips (3), after passing through the slit on the last strip (6), made a complete turn (7) around the strip and the two ends were knotted together (8); *d*, in the completed mat, the strips were drawn close together so that the surface was formed of the edges of the opened out rushes and the connecting weft strings (3) were concealed except for the loops (1) on the first strip (2), and the knotted ends on the last strip.

The banana material consists of the dry parts of the leaf sheaths which enclose the trunk. It is torn off in wide strips which are cut to the required length of the wefts. The wide strips are split into narrower strips and these again are split into wefts of the required width but left unsplit at one end of the strip to make the plaiting commencement easier. The unsplit butt ends are crossed diagonally to provide sinistral and dextral wefts. This technique is widely spread and has been termed the double butt commencement by Buck who has described it in detail in the pandanus plaiting of the Cook Islands (33, p. 110) and Samoa (34, p. 217). The body of the basket is plaited in twilled twos and the bottom closed with a 2-course braid described in detail by Buck (30, pp. 134, 135) for Tongareva. Briefly, the basket which forms a cuff is pressed together so that the plaited edge of one rim comes together in a line. Commencing at the far end, the worker plaits the free ends of the wefts inclined toward her into a continuous braid and, when she reaches the near end, she continues the braid as a free 3-ply braid which she finishes off by making a half hitch with one ply around the other two plies. She reverses the

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WOODEN IMAGES

Next to the stone statues, the most famous products of Easter Island art are the wooden images representing emaciated or decaying human beings. These figures are mentioned for the first time by G. Forster (83, vol. 1, p. 582). Since Captain Cook's expedition a great many of these images have reached museums and private collections the world over.[14] There are few works of Polynesian art which have been more widely scattered or have become more popular. The number of wooden figures from Easter Island contrasts strongly with its geographical and ethnographical importance and may be explained only as the result of active production over a long period of time. The intelligent and observant natives of Easter Island soon noted the interest that their strange carvings aroused in white visitors and realized that they might be made a source of profit. The early commercialization of their art is manifest in the poor quality of many wooden statues which were acquired on the island in the second half of the last century, at a time when the old traditions of workmanship were still alive. The pieces collected by Pierre Loti in 1871 (145, fig. 139) are decadent as are the specimens that Thomson bought fifteen years later. In 1882 (87, p. 32) there were still a few old images on the island that the natives were unwilling to sell. All the images which have been purchased on the island since that time exhibit the same clumsiness of form, the same crudeness of detail, and denote the same decadence in taste and in technical skill of native artists. Figures not carved for sale are characterized by elegance of outline and by a vigorous style. They are expressive of an art with a long tradition and they reveal the unusual talent and craftsmanship of the wood carvers.

The poor taste of visitors to the island is greatly responsible for the passing of the old art. Seamen, especially the Chileans, buy statues, not because of their interest or their beauty, but because they are funny. The natives are perfectly aware of this fact, and they now seek to make their images as ridiculous as possible. The ancient forms have been exaggerated and twisted; the images are no longer conventionalized figures but awkward caricatures. (See the images published by Knoche, 123, pp. 138, 140; figs. 171, 176-178, 182-184.) The natives believe that the bigger a statue, the more splendid it is to foreigners, hence the general tendency is to produce carvings of gigantic proportions. Several years ago an officer of the *Baquedano* bought an image which was nearly 10 feet high.

The carving of wooden images is the only regular industry of the island.

[14] Wooden images from Easter Island have been reproduced in the following publications: Routledge, 194, figs. 119-120; Lehmann, 139, figs. 1, 2, 5, 6; Karutz, 116, figs. 1-4; Bahnson, 8, vol. 1, fig. 37; Schulze-Maizier, 199, pl. 20; Pinart, 178, pp. 239-240; Thomson, 215; pl. 50, figs. 1-3; Lavachery, 132, p. 14; Ratzel, 184, vol. 2, p. 331; Buschan, 36, vol. 2, fig. 171; Edge-Partington, 68, pls. 1-3; Shapiro, 202, Cahiers d'art, figs. 171, 176-178, 182, 184, 185, 187, 188; Chauvet, 45, figs. 116-148; Handbook to Ethnological Collection, 102, British Museum, fig. 138; Knapp, 117, p. 466.

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
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Each year, when the *Baquedano* arrives with her crew of cadets, the natives barter images for clothes and soap. Though expert carvers are few, through the complicated system of mutual gifts every man and woman has a number of statues to sell. Some manufacturers have workshops with most up-to-date tools. The images are caved with chisel and plane and polished with emery paper.

The carved human figures can be classified as follows: *moai kavakava,* emaciated men (except for a few modern images); *moai paapaa,* thin women with some male characteristics; *moai aringa,* double-headed images; *manu-*

FIGURE 37.—Male wooden image (*moai kavakava*): *a*, front, human figure carved in relief on top of head (fig. 38, *a*), lips closer together in middle than at sides, nipples indicated just above ribs, two pairs of 12 ribs with sternum lacking, xiphisternum long, sharp, and bent inward, long abdomen separated from innominate bones by deep groove; *b*, back, seventh cervicle pierced with hole for suspension, 13 vertebrae, innominate bones indicated by three ridges forming a triangle divided by sacrum; *c*, side, height 455 mm., shoulder width 96 mm. (Ratton coll., Paris).

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
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UNCLASSIFIED ADZES

Some specimens in the Bishop Museum collection cannot be included in either of the two types just defined. However, they are too few and too crudely made to be considered as a special type.

Two adzes (C3949, B3600) are decidedly triangular, but they are only chipped, with no trace of grinding. As they are unfinished, their shape cannot be considered distinctive. Had they been ground they would have belonged to type 1.

The adz in figure 47, *c* is characterized by its square cross section and by the more or less equal width of its four surfaces, which are well ground.

In the entire collection there are only three small adzes with a more or less circular cross section (B3542a, C3906, C3950). (See fig. 47, *d*.) Two are broken and, though small, may be included in type 2.

MODERN IMITATIONS OF OLD ADZES

When Easter Islanders discovered the commercial value of the implements left by their ancestors, they increased their supplies of antiques by faking specimens. In the Young collection I picked out 29 adzes which were obviously counterfeit. The bevel of modern adzes is ground on both sides as in European tools and the surface of the bevel is too even to have been obtained by ancient methods. The imitators apparently selected thin plates of stone with the general adz shape when that was possible.

The natives no longer make adzes. However, I was presented with a stone knife of the same material as that used in the old adzes, and I was later told that it had been made during our stay.

HAFTING

In the Bishop Museum collection there are hafts of two adzes from Easter Island (fig. 48, *a-b*). Their form corresponds to that of one hafted adz collected by Thomson (215, pl. 57). Easter Island adz hafts have several distinctive characteristics:

The shaft is continued to meet the front of the foot, as there is no projecting heel. The front of the toe which supports the adz is flat; the back and the sides are convex.

An Easter Island shaft collected by Thomson (Nat. Mus. 129734) has a heel with a longitudinal depression on its upper surface in which the stone blade was embedded (fig. 48, *c*). Another hafted adz in the same collection resembles those in figure 48.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER POLYNESIAN ADZES

Comparative study shows that Easter Island adzes are connected with those of the rest of Polynesia. Type 1 is widespread and probably ancient; type 2 was developed locally, though it resembles adzes of New Zealand and the Chatham Islands.

Tangless adzes are found almost everywhere in Polynesia. However, the tanged adz has been adopted throughout central and marginal Polynesia, with the significant exceptions of Mangareva and Easter Island (35). It would seem, therefore, that the Easter Islanders broke away from the rest of Polynesia before the specialization of the adz took place. The adzes of western

2:Ferdon A-5 (1956) 1957
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[583] 585 great majority follow a formalized pattern. At the present time two Chilean-
[177] derived marriage ceremonies take place, a civil marriage on a Saturday and a Catholic church marriage on Sunday. However it is on Saturday, after the civil wedding, that the bridegroom's father gives a large feast for both of the extended families involved in the match. It is at this time that the gifts received by the bride's and bridegroom's fathers are formally distributed among their respective families.
[583] To aid in this division of the spoils, a "secretary" is appointed to see that each relative receives a gift of value proportionate to the one he originally gave to the gift exchange. All my informants agreed that the marriage gift-exchange ceremony is a period of great and jovial rivalry to see which family has given the biggest and most valuable gifts.

On Sunday evening after the church wedding a general party for the couple is given, and it is at this time that the bridegroom sings a specially composed song
[533] to his bride and she, in turn, sings her special song to him, each going to the other's house for the purpose. It is the best of these songs that have been maintained on Easter Island and today compose the more modern corpus of true Easter Island songs.

591 Upon the marriage of a young couple they are free to live in the home of either
439 of their parents, or they may build a home of their own. Actually, living with one
648 or another of the parents is a virtual necessity, owing to the fact that all building
135 materials are brought from the continent once a year by the Chilean Navy and the
342 supply has never caught up with the demand. Further hindering construction is the government's rationing system which, though abundantly fair, allows no single family to buy in one year all the material needed to build a home. This system has
[596] resulted in the development, or maintenance, of an extended family pooling system in which, if the family is large enough and each draws his rightful ration of building materials, a house can often be built from the total extended family allotment for a single year. It might also be mentioned that in the construction of such a house, any, or all, of the extended family may be called upon for aid.

423 Although the building of a house is a problem, a young couple as yet has no
648 difficulty in obtaining land. At the present time the Chilean government allots the use-rights to five hectarias of terrain to each newly married couple. Formerly an Easter Islander could own his land outright, but this is no longer true, the Chilean government retaining title to all land, owing, apparently, to the strategic nature of the island in the event of war.

606 One of the more interesting facets of Easter Island marriage is the position of the father-in-law in the life of the married couple. Of the two male parents-in-law, it is the girl's father who appears to hold the dominant position of power in the

4:Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1945
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We saw Easter Island for the first time on a rainy day in winter. It was also my first sight of a Polynesian island. I did not expect, of course, to find the classic coconut palms and hibiscus, for I knew that the island was without trees or shrubs, but I certainly had not imagined that this outpost of the sunny islands in the South Seas would remind me, as it did at once, of the coasts of Sweden and Norway. When the cruiser on which we had made the voyage anchored off Hangaroa, the only modern village on the island, memories of Scandinavia came even more vividly into my mind as I examined through my field glasses the frame houses of the natives, which are of a type common in northern Europe. The capital of the legendary Easter Island looked, for all the world, like a humble fishermen's hamlet seen in a fog on the Baltic.

I shall never forget that first day when we were anchored just off the little harbor. Gusts of wind drove long rollers against the shore with such force that they broke amid spouts of spray with a deep pounding. In front of the sandy cove, the waves piled up over a bar that, it seemed, nobody could cross. The natives gathered on the beach did not appear very eager to meet us, but the *karanga*, the cries which announce any important event, had sounded in the village, and from everywhere, on all the paths leading to the sea, we could see men on horseback coming at full speed. Near the boathouses a palaver was held, and on the outcome of that everything depended. The commander of the cruiser had decided that on no condition would he put us and our 90 boxes of equipment ashore. Our only hope for an immediate and safe landing lay with the natives.

Suddenly we saw them rush to the boathouses, drag three canoes toward the sea, jump into them and disappear in the surf. We held our breath, expecting the canoes to capsize in their attempt to cross the bar. But after a short time, one, two, then all three surged up from the wall of water and headed toward our ship. The men were received with cheers, a well-deserved tribute to their courage and skill.

When the canoes reached our ship we saw that they were full of natives wearing the most surprising disguises. The majority were dressed in old uniforms of the Chilean navy. In one canoe there were, it appeared, lieutenants, admirals, surgeons, and engineers. A few had also put on feather headdresses, similar to those in which their ancestors had received Captain Cook, but they wore them merely as an advertisement of the native wares of all kinds which they wished to trade for shirts and sailors' caps.

Each time I find myself using the word "natives" for the modern inhabitants of Easter Island, I have a hesitant feeling, just as hesitant as on that day when I first saw their faces over the railing. I

4:Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1945
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could not decide whether these men were a heterogeneous crowd of European beachcombers or real Polynesians, the sons of the sea rovers who had colonized the island. That European blood flowed in their veins, there was no doubt. Some of the men who came aboard and tried to sell their curios looked decidedly French; others might almost have had brothers or cousins in Hamburg or in London. Yet there was something exotic in all of them and traces of old Polynesian descent could be seen in their black, wavy hair, in the strange, vivacious dark eyes, in the high foreheads. These first Easter Islanders whom I met impressed me as of mixed race. Later, genealogical investigations showed that only a third of the present inhabitants could claim descent from a pure Polynesian ancestry—and the claims were not always well attested.

There is one misconception about these people which should be dispelled. It has been stated over and over again that the modern Easter Islanders are a degenerate population and that they can have nothing in common with the people who carved the statues and inscribed the tablets. This is not true. They appeared to me in many ways to be highly gifted.

During the 6 months I spent on the island, I found myself compelled to admire their ingenuity and their remarkable talent for assimilation. No European village has given me the impression of more intelligent adaptation to a changing world. This capacity is doubtless responsible, in part, for the passing of the old culture. Though the most isolated people in the world, the Easter Islanders are constantly on the lookout for new ideas, new fashions—and also new vices. Their extraordinary faculty for exploiting any weakness or interest in their visitors has had some amusing results. For example, a few years after the missionaries came to the island, the natives started to speculate on the antiquities and on the mysterious past of their little country. Finding that foreigners were interested in the small wooden images of emaciated figures which had been one of their forefathers' greatest artistic achievements, they proceeded to produce crude imitations by the hundreds. The modern craftsmen are without illusion as to the perfection of their work, but they excuse themselves by saying: "Why should we bother about beauty and finish when our patrons don't discriminate between good and bad images and we get in exchange the soap and clothes we want!" Thanks to this commercial instinct, several of their old industries have been kept alive.

One of their greatest and most profitable activities is palming off on amateur archeologists rough stones alleged to be ancient artifacts or well-made imitations of them. The very day of my landing a native cynically proposed to cooperate with me in faking old imple-

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ments and works of art. His idea was that since I had books and photographs showing the designs and he had the manual skill we might form an ideal, not to say a profitable, partnership. I must confess that on several occasions the islanders' skillful imitations completely deceived me, and I thus acquired a beautiful collection of ancient stone hooks that I only gradually realized were modern copies.

This continued practice of the traditional arts has a certain historical bearing. It suggests that there has never been a complete breach in Easter Island civilization and that the present natives, however mixed in blood they may be, are, nevertheless, the successors in direct line of the unknown men who carved the old wooden images that are nowadays prized specimens in our museums.

Unfortunately, this is not the only old custom which has survived. From the time when the Dutch discovered the island to the present, its people have had the reputation of being the cleverest thieves in the South Seas, and quite rightly. This complaint is repeated in all the accounts of the early navigators, and many of the dramatic incidents on the beach of Hangaroa have arisen from the natives' brazen contempt for the sanctity of private property. Only the sensitive and elegant French explorer La Pérouse adopted the policy of laughing at such pilfering, and paid no further attention to it. He and his men were amused by the attitude of the native women who helped their mates pick pockets by distracting the attention of innocent victims through entreaties and "ludicrous gestures."

The natives of our day are just as thievish as their forefathers, and this wayward disposition is the cause of endless troubles for the English company which has leased the island from the Chilean Government for sheep raising. To prevent constant stealing of the sheep the company put barbed wire across the island in an attempt to force the people to remain within the bounds of their village. But such drastic measures were of little avail, and in the year I spent there 3,000 sheep disappeared. Though the culprits are known to the whole community, family loyalty protects them and makes investigation useless.

Otherwise the natives are law-abiding and peaceful; there are very few records of murder or bloody violence among them. The only criminal we heard of was one of our guides, who, ironically enough, proved to be about the only honest man on the island.

The people live as they did in the past, on the produce of their fields. Taros, sweetpotatoes, yams, bananas, and sugarcane grow abundantly on the fertile volcanic soil. The only wants they cannot supply themselves are for manufactured goods such as soap. And they like especially to get foreign clothing. In this matter, the men

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do well for themselves by barter with the white sailors who visit the island, but the women cannot be so provided for. They complain bitterly of the difficulty they have in satisfying their coquettish taste.

For an anthropologist, the material on Easter Island is rather scant. The old culture has nearly gone. No Westerner ever saw it while it was still functioning. The data on the past, which can be gathered, are limited to statements or tales which a few people have heard from fathers or grandfathers. Nevertheless, I was surprised to find a relatively rich folklore, which helped me to understand many aspects of the ancient civilization. Both legends and anecdotes stress cannibalism, which seems to have haunted the imagination of the Easter Islanders before the arrival of Christianity.

Those who expect to find in these traditions any evidence for the existence of a civilization previous to that of the Polynesians will be sadly disappointed. There is not a single feature of the Easter Island lore that does not point toward Polynesian origin. The language itself is pure Polynesian, and no words now in use hint of a legacy from any other linguistic stock.

These are the main facts to bear in mind as we turn to the problem posed by the mysterious gigantic statues and the inscribed tablets. But before we go into it, we must first consider what is to be said of the theory that the island is a peak of a sunken continent, since upon this assumption the classic interpretation of its mysteries has for a long time rested. There is no scientific evidence that Easter Island is the wreckage of such a sunken continent—Lemuria or Atlantis. It is plainly a typical volcanic island of recent origin, formed by a series of eruptions originating on the floor of the ocean. Soundings have revealed a depth of 1,770 fathoms 20 miles from its coast. Moreover, when the island was settled by Polynesian migrants it does not seem to have been much more extensive than it is now. Its coasts are subjected to continual erosion from the waves, and it is true that during the last decades a few of the monuments which once stood on the top of a high cliff have been precipitated into the sea. But since the ancient sanctuaries were erected along the shore, if the erosion had been very great, all of them would have been washed away by now. There has also been a question about a great road which, it is said, ran to the shore of the island and continued under water, suggesting that the shore was once much farther out. The famous French writer, Pierre Loti, was, if I am not mistaken, the first to mention this "triumphal avenue," which he thought would lead to the heart of the mystery. On a simple statement of this traveling poet visions of submerged glory have been based, and many good minds have allowed their imaginations to follow the submarine road down to enchanted palaces. The truth is that no such road exists. What Loti took for

7: Anonymous T-5 (1770)1908
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133 the other, and we found 26 fathoms there, rocky bottom. The middle one resembles a high church tower; we attempted to gain a footing on it, but found it little accessible. We passed on to the outer one, where we 136 succeeded in landing, and on which we found two large masses of seaweed, many black flints, some sea urchins and small crabs, eggs of sea-gulls and their fledgelings. On these rocks alone did we see any sea-gulls, and excepting fowls we saw no other kind of birds on either of the other islets, nor on the island of San Carlos, either small or large, wild or domesticated. The islanders breed [235] these fowls in little runs scraped out in the ground and thatched over.

Having made an investigation of these islets we pursued our course along the coast, at times under sail, at other times under oars; and, the wind holding contrary, at three o'clock in the afternoon we stood in towards a smooth patch of foreshore about a league away to the N.E. of Cape San Francisco. Here we decided to bring up for the night in a small bay which appeared to us to be a suitable place for the purpose, and to which we gave the appellation of the Cave, because there was one adjoining the beach at this place with furrows in it of various tints, from which the natives gave us to understand by signs they obtained the pigments with which they paint themselves. This bay is ● 439 only suitable for launches. We all went ashore to eat our dinner, which we carried with us for that purpose, and some 609 hundred or so natives came to look on, offering us fruits and hens. The officer, Don Cayetano de Lángara, issued orders to our people that no one, under pain of a severe flogging, should accept any article from the islanders without giving some equivalent in return, or something of greater value than that which they received, since it was known there was a disposition to exchange articles; and such in fact was put into practice.

8: Behrens T-5 (1721-1722) 1908
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609 us a quantity of dressed fowls and roots. One amongst these was an entirely white man, who was wearing white chocks of wood in his ears as large as one's fist, and bore a very devout appearance, so that we took him to be an idol priest. By some misadventure one of the natives who were on board the vessels got shot, and this must have caused a great consternation amongst them, for they all immediately sprang into the water and some swam away towards the shore, but others made off in their skiffs with all possible haste. We then with 150 men, soldiers as well as seamen, proceeded in the name of God ashore: and among them there was present our Admiral himself, by whom I was given command of a section of the party. I was the first who, at the disembarkation, set foot on the island. The inhabitants pressed round us in such crowds that we could scarcely pass along, so that we had to force a way through them; and, because some of them went so far as to lay hold of our arms (weapons), they were fired upon: by which they were direly alarmed, and dispersed, but collected again in swarms, though keeping some ten paces in front of us, believing that they were already out of range of our weapons at that distance.

609 Many of them were shot at this juncture; and among the slain lay the man who had been with us before, at which we were
● 439 much grieved. In order to obtain possession of the bodies they
262 congregated in great numbers, bringing with them presents of various kinds of fruits and vegetables, in order that we might the more readily surrender to them their slain. The consternation of these people was by no means abated: even their children's children in that place will in times to come be able to recount the story of it. They kept up an uncommon yelling: women as well as children brought palm branches, red and white streamers, and various kinds of fruits, Indian figs, large nuts, sugar-cane, roots, fowls,—alive, boiled, and roast. They even flung themselves at our
[201] feet, displayed the streamers in front of us, and prostrated themselves on their knees before us, presenting their palm branches as peace offerings. They also made tender of their womenkind,
[548] asking whether we would accompany them into their huts, or had rather take them off to the ships. However, we did them no ill, but made a present to them of a piece of gaily coloured linen print between fifty and sixty ells in length, which they measured fathomwise more than a hundred times over. We also distributed coral baubles, small mirrors, etc., by which they might be assured that we were their friends. After that they brought us more than

8: Behrens T-5 (1721-1722) 1908
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500 live fowls, which were like those of the Vierländen, this time without any boiled or roast ones, together with many roots, some red, some white, a good lot of potatoes which tasted almost like bread, and which are used by these people in the same way; and some hundreds of sugar-canes, great quantities of *pisang*[1], being Indian figs as large as a cucumber a span in length and of proportionate thickness, with a green rind. When one peels this off [the pulp] tastes like figs, or as sweet as honey: there are sometimes as many as a hundred on a single bunch. The leaf is from two to three feet broad and from six to eight feet in length. It is with these that our first parents should have covered themselves in Paradise after their unfortunate Fall, because it is almost the largest and strongest leaf which one meets with in Morning and Evening lands.

No animals were met with, as far as we penetrated on this occasion, except sundry species of birds; but there may be many other animals farther in the interior of the country, as the natives seemed acquainted with pigs when they saw some on board our ships.

The natives prepare their meals in pots made of clay or earth. Each household appeared to us to have its own.

The houses were from forty to sixty feet [*schuh*] long, six to eight feet [*schuh*] in width, and of similar height, set up on wooden stakes, daubed over with luting and covered in with palm leaves. As regards their subsistence it appears that it must be procured by tillage of the soil, as we saw it everywhere planted and bearing crops. Moreover the fields or lands were all measured off with a cord, and very neatly cultivated. At the time of our visit all their crops were maturing: the fields and trees were in full bearing, and I feel sure that if we had explored this country right through many good things would have been met with, since we were there in just the best season of the year.

No remarkable furniture was found inside their houses, except some red and white coverlets [*decken*] which they often use as apparel, and also for sleeping under. These coverlets felt like silk, to the touch, so that one could almost conclude they had looms by means of which they made them themselves.

These natives were universally blithe and merry, well-built, strong in limb, not exactly slender, yet nimble on their feet; friendly and pleasant in manner, but submissive withal, and also very timid. Most of them, when bringing any object such as

[1] *Pisang* is the Malayan generic term for the banana.

9: Forster T-5 (1774) 1777
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the ſun. Here we reſted a while, and then deſcended by a different route into another ſet of fields, which were treated in the ſame manner as the reſt. None of them had any ſort of encloſures, though the hiſtorians of Roggewein's voyage, who ſeem to have conſulted fancy more than truth, make mention of them. The encreaſing heat of the day had entirely exhauſted us, when we had ſtill a conſiderable way to make down to the ſea-ſide. Fortunately we paſſed by a native who was at work, gathering potatoes in one of the fields. We complained of great thirſt to him, upon which, though he was an old man, he immediately ran to a large plantation of ſugar-canes, and brought us a great load of the beſt and juicieſt on his back. We made him ſome preſents in return for them, cut them into walking-ſticks, and, as we went along, gradually peeled and ſucked them, finding their juice extremely refreſhing. 1774. MARCH.

At our return to the landing-place we found captain Cook ſtill occupied in trading with the inhabitants, who brought him ſome fowls ready dreſſed, and ſome matted baſkets full of ſweet potatoes, but ſometimes deceived him by filling the baſket with ſtones, and only laying a few potatoes at the top. The moſt valuable article of trade on our part were empty coco-nut ſhells, which we had received at the Society and Friendly Iſlands; but they were not current, unleſs the hole in them was very ſmall, or unleſs they had a cover. The Taheitian and European cloths

9: Forster T-5 (1774) 1777
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1774. MARCH. were valued in the next degree according to the ſize of the pieces; and iron-ware bore an inferior price. The greateſt part of the natives who traded with us inſtantly ran off with the cloth, nut-ſhell, or the nail which had been given in exchange for their potatoes, as if they were apprehenſive that we might repent of our bargain, even though they dealt honeſtly with us. Some among them were bold enough to run off with what they had received, as the price of their proviſions, before they had delivered up the goods for which we had bargained. From ſuch circumſtances the deplorable condition of the natives became more and more conſpicuous. The ſcarcity of cloth among them was extremely great, moſt of the people being forced to go naked; but this did not prevent their ſelling what little cloth they had in exchange for that of Taheitee. The deſire of poſſeſſing this cloth prompted them to expoſe to ſale ſeveral articles which perhaps they would not have parted with ſo eaſily under other circumſtances. Among theſe were their different caps or head-dreſſes, their necklaces, ornaments for the ear, and ſeveral human figures, made of narrow pieces of wood about eighteen inches or two feet long, and wrought in a much neater and more proportionate manner than we could have expected, after ſeeing the rude ſculpture of the ſtatues. They were made to repreſent perſons of both ſexes; the features were not very pleaſing, and the whole figure was much too long to be natural; however, there was ſomething cha-

racteriſtic